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ABSTRACT

A description of the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement's standards and curriculum for its Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) program, first designed in 1983, outlines the principles on which the curriculum is based, its structure, and development over its first 15 years. An introductory section gives background information on the project and its design. The second section explains the adoption of the competency-based approach to English language instruction, the design of the core curriculum, and provision for local curriculum development based on this core. The specific competencies for each instructional level are then listed, and criteria for assessing performance at each level are detailed. Finally, procedures and issues in learner assessment and program accountability are discussed. Appended materials include a list of original MELT program participants, a list of commercial textbook series that incorporate MELT competencies, and oral language, reading, and writing assessment checklists at the beginning level. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Spring Institute for International Studies

E L T

Technical Assistance for
English Language Training Projects
1997-1998

Sponsored by the
Office of Refugee Resettlement

Performance-Based Curricula and Outcomes

The Mainstream English Language Training Project (MELT) Updated for the 1990s and Beyond

Prepared by

Allene G. Grognet
Center for Applied Linguistics

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1: Introduction

The Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) initiative of 1983 was designed to formulate standards for ORR-funded adult refugee English language training (ELT) programs. It consisted of several phases, namely: research, field testing and materials development, and dissemination and implementation of English language training standards. The primary objective of the MELT initiative was to develop standards for testing, leveling, and curriculum in English language training for ORR-funded refugee ESL programs.

Seven national ELT projects funded by ORR in 1983/84 field-tested the MELT and developed the ORR Competency-Based MELT Resource Package. (See Appendix A.) There were 19 refugee ELT programs participating as demonstration sites, and over 1375 refugees participating in the field testing. The products developed during the project consisted of the following:

- a competency-based, outcome-oriented Core Curriculum Guide
- a system for defining Student Performance Levels (SPLs)
- a valid and reliable instrument for assessing students' English proficiency, the Basic English Skills Test (BEST).

The package provided the mechanism for standardizing refugee English language training across the U.S. and encouraged ELT providers to focus on functional language skills needed by refugees on the job and in daily life.

Since its inception, MELT has had a major impact on the field, including the development of commercial textbooks that incorporate the MELT competencies. (See Appendix B.) This current document is an update of the 1983/84 MELT project. It reflects what we have learned during the last fifteen years about language teaching and learning.

First, language is most effectively learned through a curriculum reflecting authentic contexts. These contexts should reflect the roles learners play as workers, family members and citizens in the world in which the learner is expected to communicate in English: at work, in the supermarket, with the landlord, with the doctor, etc. A corollary to this principle is that language is best presented not as isolated sentences or words, but as meaningful discourse. Group and pair work help learners acquire language through interaction with others while performing meaningful tasks in meaningful contexts. This collaborative work among students also helps prepare learners for the teamwork needed in the world of work.

Second, communication is a process, with comprehension preceding production. Adult learners need time to listen to language and absorb what is happening in a variety of communicative situations. They need many and varied opportunities in which to be exposed to oral language, using pictures, film, video, etc.

Third, a low anxiety level in the classroom is key to student participation. For adults, language learning is, by its nature, an anxiety-laden pursuit. The more a teacher focuses on "doing something with language" e.g. finding new information, describing a thing or situation, buying a product -- rather than on "learning the language," the more likely the student will be to engage in the process of acquiring the language. The classroom should become learner centered, with a collaborative effort between teacher and learner occurring, with the learners playing an active role in their own learning process.

Fourth, assessment is part of teaching. Learners need to demonstrate what they can *do* with English, not what they know about English. Learners also need an opportunity to express what they feel their language learning needs are and in what contexts they need English. Both the formal test mode and performance-based (non-formal) assessment are needed to give learners and teachers information about individual and class goals and progress.

Fifth, programs need to be accountable. All programs, whether government funded, state funded, or private, need to be accountable to their students and their funding sources. Because students do not have unlimited time to learn English, programs must be able to demonstrate to both their learners and their funding sources that there has been measurable progress in learners' English proficiency.

The above principles were all stated, in one way or another, in the original MELT document which was grounded in a competency-based education framework. These principles have received new emphasis over the past fifteen years, as competency-based education has evolved into a more collaborative process of language learning where students work together with one another and with the teacher in meaningful activities that integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening, as these skills are used in real life.

2: The Core Curriculum

Introduction

Competency-based education (CBE) was the major building block for the original MELT curriculum. CBE, as used in the MELT project and defined by the U.S. Office of Education, is a performance-based process leading to mastery of basic and life skills necessary for the individual to function proficiently in society.

- Instructional content focuses on the application of basic and life skills needed within a learner's role as worker, parent, or community member.
- Instructional content is derived from an assessment of the learner's needs, goals and abilities.

In adapting the CBE process to adult ESL instruction, the major paradigm shift for MELT programs was to focus language instruction on enabling learners to demonstrate **what they would be able to do with language** as opposed to demonstrating **what they know about language, i.e. grammar and vocabulary.**

In 1983, the CBE approach was selected by MELT as the framework of choice because it was consistent with:

- an accepted curriculum development model,
- current linguistic theory on the teaching of language for communicative competence, and
- adult learning theory that states that learning is more rapid when instruction is relevant and immediately applicable to learners' lives.

In updating this section of the MELT materials, we would like to emphasize the features of CBE/ELT that we feel need continuing consideration. In CBE/ELT programs:

- Instructional content is based on objectives or competency statements derived from an assessment of students' real-life roles, needs, goals and abilities.
- The teaching of language skills is applied to the performance of relevant life tasks.
- On-going assessment directly related to the curriculum is provided.
- Student progress is monitored and appropriate feedback is provided on a regular basis.
- Achievement is based on demonstrated performance in a simulated real-life situation.
- The use of a variety of instructional methodologies is promoted.
- Instruction is learner-centered and interactive.

While many of the concepts in the original MELT project are timeless, we would like to bring to the reader's attention other important initiatives that have appeared since MELT and that may impact how ESL instruction is planned and implemented. This is particularly true for employment skills and ESL instruction. We refer readers to the following documents or offices:

Grognet, A.G. (1997). *Integrating employment skills into adult ESL instruction.* ERIC/PAIE Q&A. Washington, D.C. : National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education.

National Institute for Literacy. (1996). *Equipped for the Future.* Washington, D.C. Author

U.S. Department of Labor, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills. (1991). *What work requires of schools.* Washington, D.C. Author

The Core Curriculum

In the original MELT curriculum, competencies were listed in topical and cross-topical areas for seven levels of instruction. This corresponds to the first seven levels in the MELT Student Performance Levels (SPLs). (See the following section.) In the intervening years, it has become clear that most refugees fall into three proficiency levels: 1. Pre- and Non-literate; 2. Beginning; and 3. Intermediate. The revised core curriculum framework has integrated cross topics into the curriculum and lists competencies under topics within the three proficiency categories.

Original MELT Document

Topics	**Cross-topics**
Banking	**Clarification**
Community Services	**Directions**
Employment: Finding a Job	**Money**
Employment: On the Job	**Personal Identification**
Health	**Social Language**
Housing	**Telephone**
Shopping	**Time**
Transportation	

For the revised document we have listed the topics as follows:

Revised MELT Document

Basic Language (Clarification, Personal Identification, Social Language, Time)
Community Services (Telephone)
Consumer Economics (Banking, Shopping, Money)
Employment (Finding a Job, On the Job)
Health
Housing
Transportation and Directions

The Core Curriculum provides for flexibility in the development of curricula at the local level. Local programs must determine what is key to their students. Program context, program emphasis, or geographical area are also critical design factors. A guideline of steps adapted from the original MELT document is listed below and should be helpful.

Step 1: Conduct a needs assessment of **your** program by identifying the students' language needs for the local work environment and community.*

Step 2: Compare the areas of language as indicated by the needs assessment with the Core Curriculum, local program objectives, and local curriculum topics for each level.

Step 3: Select or adapt topics per level or for multilevel classes.

Step 4: Link language functions (e.g., getting information, giving advice, expressing emotions, following directions) and grammar with the competencies chosen.

*Needs assessment is an on-going process. The curriculum should accurately reflect the student population, their levels, the local job market, and the general "survival" needs of the community. It should also include, as mentioned above, a sense of what learners themselves say they want and need to know. There are a variety of methods for conducting a needs assessment. Oral and written questionnaires, native language interviews, testing and assessment, observation of refugee interactions, perusal of written materials from the work place and community agencies, etc., are all part of the needs assessment process.

Pre- and Non-Literate (SPL 0-1)

Basic Language

- Give personal information orally, and copy onto simple forms (name, address, phone, country of origin, ID/Social Security No., etc.).
- Spell, read, and print own name, indicating which is first, last, and middle.
- Use appropriate greetings/farewells (Hello, good-bye).
- Introduce oneself.
- Read clock time on the hour, half-hour, and quarter hour.
- Read days of the week.
- Express a lack of understanding.
- Ask for repetition.
- Ask simple "yes/no" questions.
- Respond to "what" and "where" questions.

Community Services

- Read and interpret emergency words, e.g. FIRE, POLICE, POISON.
- Read, say and dial telephone number for emergency services.
- Using the telephone, spell name and address and report an emergency in simple terms.
- Identify basic community facilities and services (post office, school, etc.)
- Ask for stamps at a post office.

Consumer Economics

- Identify basic consumer economic services (bank, market, clothing store, etc.).
- Cash a check or money order, endorse it, and provide proper ID.
- State basic food and clothing needs.
- Identify names of U.S. coins and bills and read simple money amounts.
- Pay the total amount requested orally or in writing.

Employment

- Identify common entry-level jobs.
- Read common warning or safety signs at work.
- State previous employment and own job skills in simple terms.
- State current job status.
- Print or sign name on time sheet.
- Ask if a task was done correctly.
- Ask supervisor or co-worker for help.
- Respond to simple questions about work progress and completion of tasks.
- Respond to simple oral warnings or basic safety commands.
- Give simple excuses for lateness or absence.
- Follow one-step instructions.

Health

- Identify medical facilities, workers and signs.
- State need for medical help (I'm sick; my ____ hurts).
- Identify major body parts, illness or injuries.
- State a need for an interpreter.

Housing

- Identify common household rooms and furniture.
- Identify basic types of available housing.
- Read EXIT signs in housing.

Transportation and Directions

- Ask for location of a place.
- Follow simple oral directions to a place.
- Orally give streets and landmarks near residence.
- Read a limited number of symbols or transportation/pedestrian signs.

Beginning (SPL 2-3)

All of the above plus the following:

Basic Language

- Write personal information (name, address, phone, SS#, country of origin, etc.).
- Ask "what", "where", and "when" questions.
- Ask for clarification.
- Use appropriate social language to introduce self and others.
- Recognize days, months, times.
- Write dates.

Community Services

- Read emergency words.
- Address an envelope/package, including return address.
- Call 911 (or local equivalent).

Consumer Economics

- Ask for and read the price of food, clothing, or other items in a store.
- Differentiate size by reading tags and request size and color for an item in simple terms.
- Ask for information and follow directions for buying food, clothing, and household items.
- Read and ask about store signs, aisle numbers, and store hours.
- Locate and read expiration dates on food items.
- Ask for food using common weights and measures.
- Read abbreviations for weights and measures.

- Order and pay for food at a restaurant.
- Respond to requests for change.
- Buy and fill out a money order.
- Identify total amount due on monthly bills.

Employment

- Enumerate job skills.
- Fill out simple application forms.
- Respond to simple direct questions about work.
- Report on work progress and completion of tasks.
- Read alpha-numeric codes.
- State need for frequently used material.
- Locate common materials and facilities at the work site.
- Follow two-step instructions.

Health

- Follow simple instructions during a health visit.
- Make a doctor's appointment in person.
- Read time and date on an appointment card.
- Ask for non-prescription medication at a drug store.
- Read generic names of common non-prescription medicines.
- Ask about and follow simple instructions for using medicine.
- Read and follow simple directions on medicine labels.
- Read and report body temperature as indicated by a thermometer.
- Ask for a patient's room number in a hospital.
- Identify oneself, appointment time, and doctor's name upon arrival at a doctor's office.

Housing

- Answer simple questions about basic housing needs.
- Ask about rent.
- Read common housing signs (FIRE ESCAPE, FOR RENT, etc.).
- Report basic household problems.
- Request repairs in simple terms.

Transportation and Directions

- Ask for bus, train or plane destinations.
- Read signs indicating bus/train destinations and street numbers.
- Use a simple map to locate a place.

Intermediate (SPL 4-5)

All of the above in Beginning and Pre- and Non-Literate plus the following:

Basic Language

- Clarify by spelling or writing.
- Repeat instructions for verification.
- Ask about the meaning or pronunciation of a word.
- Ask and respond to "how" and "why" questions.

Community Services

- Report an emergency outside of home.
- Answer questions about a child and fill out simple school enrollment form.
- Read and respond appropriately to simple written communication from school.
- Respond appropriately to recorded messages and instructions from school.
- Ask about correct postage for mailing.
- Fill out a change of address form.
- Locate telephone numbers in a telephone book or yellow pages.

Consumer Economics

- Write a check.
- Fill out a deposit/withdrawal slip.
- Use and report problems in using coin-operated machines.
- Read unit price labels to compare products for value.

- State reasons for returning an item to the store.
- Respond to a cashier's questions concerning means of payment.
- Interpret clothing care labels.

Employment

- Ask and answer questions at a job interview (qualifications, experience, preferences, long term goals, benefits, etc.).
- Fill out a standard job application.
- Read want ads and identify skills needed for a job.
- Modify a task based on changes in instructions.
- Respond to supervisor's comments about quality of work (including mistakes, speed, incomplete work, etc.).
- Initiate and respond to social language from co-workers.
- Report specific problems encountered in completing a work task.
- Read warnings, storage directions, and emergency instructions.
- Write a note to explain absence from work.

Health

- Identify common symptoms, illnesses, and health problems.
- Change or cancel a doctor's appointment.
- Make or change a doctor's appointment by telephone.
- Follow oral instructions during a medical exam or about treatment.
- Fill out a simple insurance form (with assistance).

Housing

- Question errors on bills.
- Ask about and follow instructions for using and maintaining household equipment.
- Ask for information about location, rooms, rent, deposit, utilities.

Transportation and Directions

- Identify major streets and landmarks on a map.
- Use a map to find a place.
- Read about and get (with help) a driver's license.
- Give and follow simple oral or written directions to a place.

3: The Student Performance Levels (SPLs)

The Student Performance Levels document provides standard descriptions of adult refugee students' ability at a range of levels. They provide a common standard for refugee ESL level descriptions for use by programs nationwide and fill a long-felt need for a vehicle to facilitate understanding of abilities within a single ESL program and between programs. The SPLs also provide a basis for meaningful communication with providers of other services to refugees (resettlement, job placement, etc.) and within funding sources.

The SPLs are stated in levels of 0 - 10, with 0 representing no English and 10 representing native or near native speech. In the current document, 0 - 5 are represented (0 - I Pre- and Non-Literate, 2 - 3 Beginning, 4 - 5 Intermediate) since most refugees are in ESL classes at those levels. (A range of 0 - 4 is given for general pronunciation levels. See page 20.) We have also included levels 6 - 7 to show the range of ability at the Advanced Level. It is important to emphasize that students who have reached an SPL level of 5 (or 7, for that matter) in oral language, can function in English, but are not near-native speakers of English.

What is presented in the current document are the SPLs for **oral** language only. These have proven to remain fairly much the same over the past 15 years. However, the reading and writing (literacy) competencies need to be reformulated. We have learned much about reading and writing over the past 15 years which should be reflected in the SPLs. A more complete listing, including reading and writing, will be available from the English Language Training/Technical Assistance Project in 1998.

Where programs are concerned, the SPL descriptions provide a summary of a student's general language ability **upon entry into an instructional level** in the Core Curriculum. For this updated MELT, the following guidelines for placement would apply:

Student SPL level	MELT Level	B.E.S.T.	CASAS Scores
0 or 1	Pre- and Non-Literate	0-15	0-179
2 or 3	Beginning	16-41	180-200
4 or 5	Intermediate	42-57	201-220
6 or 7		58 & above	221 & above

As students exit a program, assessments should be given (see following section) to find out how much students have learned, and to assign new SPLs if applicable.

The question of how long it takes to move from one SPL to another has been asked. This is a difficult question to answer, since individual student characteristics and program specifications play such an important role, e.g. motivation, age, class size, preparation of teachers, intensity of instruction, etc. The original MELT project's field-testing of the SPL and Core Curriculum documents was unable to take into account all these conditions, making the hard data on contact hours required for level movements difficult to gauge, with ranges from 120-235 hours per SPL. We suggest that individual programs keep track of how long it takes about 50 students to move from one SPL to another, and take an average of these hours to use as a guideline.

Student Performance Levels

	General Language Ability	Listening Comprehension	Oral Communication
0	No ability whatsoever.	No ability whatsoever.	No ability whatsoever.
1	Functions **minimally, if at all,** in English. Can handle only **very routine entry-level jobs** that do not require oral communication, and in which all tasks can be easily **demonstrated.** A native speaker **used to** dealing with limited English speakers can **rarely** communicate with a person at this level **except through gestures.**	Understands only a few **isolated words, and extremely** simple learned phrases.	Vocabulary limited to **a few isolated words.** **No control** of grammar.
2	Functions in a **very limited way** in situations related to **immediate needs.** Can handle only **routine entry-level** jobs that do not require oral communication, and in which all tasks can be **easily demonstrated.** A native English speaker **used to** dealing with limited English speakers will have **great difficulty** communicating with a person at this level .	Understands a **limited number** of **very simple learned** phrases, spoken **slowly** with frequent **repetitions.**	Expresses a **limited number** of **immediate** survival needs using **very simple learned** phrases.

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	General Language Ability	Listening Comprehension	Oral Communication
3	Functions **with some difficulty** in situations related to **immediate needs.** Can handle **routine entry-level** jobs that involve only the **most basic** oral **communication,** and in which all tasks can be **demonstrated.** A native English speaker **used to** dealing with limited English speakers will have **great difficulty** communicating with a person at this level.	Understands **simple learned** phrases, spoken **slowly** with **frequent repetitions.**	Expresses **immediate survival** needs using **simple learned** phrases.
4	Can satisfy **basic survival** needs and a few **very routine** social demands. Can handle **entry-level** jobs that involve **some simple oral** communication, but in which tasks can be easily **demonstrated.** A native English speaker **used to** dealing with limited English speakers will have **difficulty** communicating with a person at this level.	Understands **simple learned phrases** easily, and **some simple new** phrases containing familiar vocabulary, spoken **slowly** with **frequent repetitions.**	Expresses **basic survival** needs including asking and responding to related questions, using both **learned and a limited number of new phrases.** Participates in basic conversations in a **few very routine social** situations. Speaks with **hesitation** and frequent pauses. **Some control** of **basic** grammar.

	General Language Ability	Listening Comprehension	Oral Communication
5	Can satisfy **basic survival** needs and **some limited social** demands. Can handle **jobs and job training** that involve following **simple oral** instructions but in which most tasks can also be **demonstrated.** A native English speaker **used to** dealing with limited English speakers will have **some difficulty** communicating with a person at this level.	Understands **learned** phrases easily and **short new** phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken **slowly** with **repetition.** Has limited **ability** to understand on the **telephone.**	Functions **independent**-in most **face-to-face basic survival** situations but needs **some help.** Asks and responds to direct questions on familiar and some unfamiliar subjects. Still relies on **learned** phrases but also uses **new** phrases (i.e. speaks with **some creativity**) but with **hesitation** and pauses. Communicates on the **phone** to express a **limited** number of **survival** needs, but with **some difficulty.** Participates in basic conversations in a **limited number of social** situations. Can occasionally clarify general meaning by simple rewording. **Increasing**, but **inconsistent** control of basic grammar.

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	General Language Ability	Listening Comprehension	Oral Communication
6	Can satisfy **most survival needs** and **limited social** demands. Can handle **jobs and job training** that involve following simple oral and written instructions and diagrams. A native English speaker **not used to** dealing with limited-English speakers will **be able to communicate** with a person at this level on familiar topics, but with **difficulty and some effort.**	Understands **conversations** containing **some unfamiliar** vocabulary on many **everyday** subjects, with a need for **repetition, rewording or slower speech**. Has **some** ability to understand **without face-to-face** contact (e.g. on the telephone, TV).	Functions **independently** in most survival situations, but needs some help. Relies less on learned phrases; speaks with **creativity,** but with **hesitation.** Communicates on the **phone** on **familiar** subjects but with **some difficulty**. Participates **with some confidence** in **social** situations when addressed **directly.** Can sometimes **clarify** general meaning by **rewording.** **Control** of **basic** grammar evident, but **inconsistent**; may attempt to use more difficult grammar but with almost no control.

	General Language Ability	Listening Comprehension	Oral Communication
7	Can satisfy **survival** needs and **routine work** and **social** demands. Can handle work that involves following **oral and simple written** instructions in **familiar and some unfamiliar** situations. A native English speaker **not used to** dealing with limited English speakers can **generally communicate** with a person at this level **on familiar topics.**	Understands **conversations** on most **everyday** subjects at **normal speed** when addressed **directly**; may **need repetition, rewording,** or **slower speech**. Understands **routine work-related** conversations. **Increasing** ability to understand **without face-to-face** contact (telephone, TV, radio). Has **difficulty** following **conversation** between **native speakers.**	Functions **independently** in **survival** and many **social and work** situations, but may need **help occasionally**. **Communicates on the phone** on **familiar** subjects. **Expands** on **basic ideas** in conversation, but still speaks with **hesitation** while searching for appropriate vocabulary and grammar. Clarifies **general meaning** easily, and can **sometimes** convey **exact** meaning. **Controls basic** grammar, but not more difficult grammar.

Global Pronunciation Rating Scale:
0 - speech is almost always unintelligible
1 - speech is frequently unintelligible
2 - speech is generally understandable, but occasionally incomprehensible
3 - speech is readily understandable

4: Assessment and Accountability

This section discusses the role of testing and assessment in English language teaching programs. It also gives information about the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and alternative forms of assessment.

Basic English Skills Test (BEST)
The BEST is a standardized **proficiency test** assessing basic functional language skills in an adult life skills context geared directly to the MELT Core Curriculum and the Student Performance Levels. It can be used for placement and proficiency purposes. The BEST consists of a Core Section (listening and oral interview) which is a one-on-one interview, and takes anywhere between 15 and 30 minutes to administer; a Literacy Section (reading and writing) which is 45 minutes; and an Administrator's Manual. A shorter version of the Core Section (5 minutes) can be administered for placement purposes only.

The BEST is available from the Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 429-9292.

Alternative Assessment
This section is provided to give teachers and administrators an addition and/or alternative to formal tests. In recent years there has been a growing interest among educators in performance-based and portfolio assessment. While multiple choice and short-answer achievement tests allow for greater content coverage as well as objective and efficient scoring, they may not adequately assess integrated skills. In addition, they are usually given at the end of a course of study, and do not show progress over time, while alternative measures are usually interspersed throughout the curriculum.

Informal or Alternative Assessment. These are not technical terms, so there are no uniformly accepted definitions. Informal and alternative assessment are used here interchangeably, and indicate the following:

- any method, other than a standardized test, of determining what a student knows or can do;
- activities that reflect tasks typical of classroom instruction and real-life settings, and that represent actual progress toward curricular goals and objectives;
- activities that are monitored and recorded in some way, either by teacher observation, peer observation, or student self-assessment.

It should also be noted that informal and alternative assessment measures are by definition criterion-referenced, i.e. they classify learners according to whether or not they are able to successfully perform a set of tasks or meet a set of objectives. Norm-referenced tests relate one learner's performance against the normative performance of a group. Standardized tests can be either norm- or criterion-referenced.

Performance-Based Assessment This is a type of informal or alternative assessment, and is characterized by:

- activities that are specifically designed to assess performance on one or more instructional tasks;
- activities where students demonstrate specific skills and competencies and are rated on a pre-determined scale of achievement or proficiency;

- activities that are rated by a teacher or other professional, rather than by peer or self-evaluation.

Although performance-based assessment may include such written tasks as filling out an application or signing a time sheet, performance-based assessment has been used mainly to document progress in **oral language.**

Portfolio Assessment This is a technique for qualitative evaluation. It is characterized by:

- the maintenance of descriptive records of a variety of students' work over time;
- the purposeful and systematic collection of student work that reflects growth toward the achievement of specific curricular objectives; and
- the inclusion of student self-evaluation as well as teacher evaluation.

Portfolio assessment in ESL has been used mainly to follow progress in **reading and writing.** Portfolios can, but need not necessarily, contain samples of student writing, records on reading achievement over time, and information on the results of formal (reading/writing) achievement tests.

Creating Performance-Based Activities The activity types listed below are all designed for teacher-student, student-student, or group settings. They concentrate on oral communication. (The Portfolio activities concentrate on literacy skills.) Activities which pair students or use group interaction are the most numerous, since they are often more natural than teacher-student interaction, save classroom time, and give the teacher the ability to listen and watch more closely while acting as rater for one or more students. Oral activity types include:

- simulation (a given environment such as a store or post office, where the student must perform a task, e.g. exchange or return merchandise)
- role play (a situation in which a student plays a role, e.g. using a telephone, a student role plays a parent of a sick child)
- description, using picture or written prompts
- oral reporting to whole class
- telling a picture story, using a sequence of three or more pictures or photographs
- interviews, using written prompts
- completing a dialog/conversation, using written prompts
- giving instructions from picture, diagram or written prompts
- completing incomplete stories
- games, such as story games, memory games, card and board games
- actual situations.

Portfolio Assessment This is a system of files which contain a variety of information assessing student performance relative to instructional objectives. It is a practical way of assessing an individual student's work throughout the entire course. Portfolios can include samples of student work, such as stories, completed forms, exercise sheets, pictures drawn and captioned by students, or other written work; formal test data; and/or checklists and rating sheets such as those at the end of this section. Like performance-based assessment,

portfolios encourage teachers to use a variety of ways to evaluate learning and to do so over time. These multiple indicators of student performance are a better cross-check for student progress than one type of measure alone.

While it is each student 's responsibility to put his/her "best work" in the portfolio file, it is the teacher's responsibility to choose the categories of work that should be placed in the file., e.g. a written story about people or a description of surroundings. Student work should be collected with a purpose, and each piece a student puts in the file should reflect progress toward a particular learning goal. In addition, teachers need to maintain check lists or summary sheets of tasks and performances in the student's portfolio, to help them look systematically across students, to make instructional decisions, and to report consistently and reliably.

Checklists The checklists in Appendix B are **examples** to help teachers choose such features and record performance information. Teachers can make their own lists for assessment. It has already been mentioned that teachers should focus on and rate only specified features of their students' performance during any given assessment activity.

Oral Checklist The oral checklist contains the key competencies at the **Beginning Level**, and space for assessing these at different times. Teachers can use this form **or devise one of their own.** While the checklist presented here contains space for assessing students at four different times during the course, teachers may find they want to assess certain features more often. Testing three to six times during a program, in different contexts, gives both students and teachers time to progress. Students, through spiraling and reinforcement, have a chance to practice language features. Teachers also have a chance to adjust their presentation and practice activities.

The rating used here -- student uses the competency appropriately **most of the time, sometimes, almost never** -- is one that teachers have found helpful in characterizing student progress. However, teachers can use any rating scale with which they feel comfortable.

Reading Checklist. The Reading portion of the checklist contains suggestions for assessing the key reading tasks of the **Beginning Level**. Again, teachers can use this form, or devise one of their own. The rating scale used for reading tasks -- **student reads independently,** with **assistance** or **not at all** -- reflect a process of moving from non-literacy to active literacy.

Writing Checklist. This portion of the checklist contains those tasks for each level that are mainly writing tasks. Note that the suggested rating scale focuses on communication rather than form for the Beginning Level, since grammar and punctuation should not be concerns at this point. They will be, of course, with more advanced students.

Checklists can be used to report individual student progress, or class progress, or both. Checklists for individual students can be kept as part of a teacher's record keeping system or placed in a student's portfolio. By aggregating the information on the checklists for each student, teachers can examine and report the class performance over the course period.

Accountability

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993 was passed to bring increased accountability into government-funded programs by incorporating performance measurement into program evaluation. During 1996-97, the Office of Refugee Resettlement began engaging its discretionary grantees in the development of outcomes

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measures. Performance-based or outcome-oriented curricula such as MELT, which by their very nature include performance measurements, are excellent tools for meeting accountability requirements for ESL and VESL service providers. In order to assist you in looking at your own program, an instrument for self-review will be available shortly from the English Language Training/Technical Assistance Project.

APPENDIX A

Original MELT Program Participants

International Institute of Boston (Ann Kaufman)

International Institute of Rhode Island (Jane House, Michael Paul)

Arlington Public Schools, Refugee Education and Employment Project (Inaam Mansoor, Peggy Seufert-Bosco, Tim Riney)

Northwest Educational Cooperative (Tipawan Reed, Linda Mrowicki, Jenise Rowekamp)

Spring Institute for International Studies (Myrna Ann Adkins, Barbara Sample)

San Diego Community College District, Continuing Education Centers (Autumn Keltner)

San Francisco Community College District, Center Division (Cecelia Doherty, K. Lynn Savage)

RMC Research Corporation (Jane Grover, Allen Schenk)

American Council of Nationalities Services (Elizabeth Mueller)

Center for Applied Linguistics (Allene Grognet, Linda Smith)

APPENDIX B

Commercial Textbook Series which Incorporate MELT Competencies

Collaborations (Levels Literacy, 1,2,3,4,5, Teacher's Edition, Workbook, Cassettes, Teacher's Resource Kit, Assessment Package)
By: Gail Weinstein, Jann Huizenga, Jean Bernard-Johnston, Cathy Shank, Donna Moss, Lynda Terrill
Publisher: Heinle and Heinle 1-800-354-9706

Crossroads (Levels 1,2,3,4, Teacher's Edition, Workbooks, Cassettes, Multilevel Activity and Resource Package, Achievement Tests)
By: Irene Frankel, Shirley Brod, Marjorie Fuchs, Cliff Meyers, Barbara Sample, Helen Fox
Publisher: Oxford University Press 1-800-451-7556

English for Adult Competency (Basic and Levels 1, 2)
By: Autumn Keltner, Leann Howard, Gretchen Bitterlin, Frances Lee
Publisher: Prentice Hall 1-800-223-1360

Expressways (Levels 1,2,3,4, Teacher's Edition, Workbooks, Cassettes)
By: Steven J. Molinsky and Bill Bliss
Publisher: Prentice Hall 1-800-223-1360

LifePrints (Levels 1,2,3, Teacher's Edition, Teacher's Resource File, Assessment, Cassettes, Using LifePrints Training Program)
By: Allene Grognet, JoAnn (Jodi) Crandall, Christy Newman, Janet Podnecky, Judy Veramendi
Publisher: New Readers Press 1-800-448-8878

Navigator (Levels 1,2,3,4, Teacher's Edition, Cassettes)
By: Steven Molinsky, Bill Bliss, Deborah Schaeffer, Carol Van Duzer, Carolyn Graham
Publisher: Prentice Hall 1-800-223-1360

Real-Life English (Levels Literacy, 1,2,3,4, Teacher's Edition, Workbooks, Cassettes, Black Line Masters)
By: Judy Veramendi and Sarah Cogliano, Literacy Level; Lynne Lilley Robinson, contributing writer.
Publisher: Steck-Vaughn 1-800-531-5015

APPENDIX C

Beginning Level

Oral Language Checklist for (student name)_____
Rating Criteria. Student uses the competency appropriately...
Most of the time (MT); Sometimes (S); Almost never (AN)

Task	Date/Rating	Date/Rating	Date/Rating	Date/Rating
1. Calls 911				
2. Uses appropriate social language				
3. Asks for clarification				
4. Asks questions (what,where,when)				
5. Asks for food, clothing in a store				
6. Asks about store signs, hours, etc.				
7. Orders and pay for food				
8. Buys and fills out money order				
9. Enumerates job skills				
10. Follows two-step oral instructions				
11. Locates common material at work				
12. Reports work progress				
13. Reports problems at work				
14. Makes a doctor's appointment				
15. Follows instructions during health visit				
16. Asks for non-prescription drugs				
17. Follows simple directions for using medicines				
18. Asks for patient's room number				
19. Asks about rent				
20. Answers questions about housing				
21. Reports basic household problems				
22. Asks for transportation destinations				

Beginning Level

Reading Checklist for (student name) _____

Rating Criteria. Student reads material...
Independently (I); With assistance (WA); Not at all (NAA)

Reading Tasks	Date/Rating	Date/Rating	Date/Rating	Date/Rating
1. Reads sight words (emergency, housing, transportation)				
2. Reads numbers in a variety of contexts				
3. Reads common housing signs				
4. Reads clothing labels				
5. Reads signs indicating transportation destination/address				
6. Reads a simple map				
7. Reads basic store signs				
8. Reads abbreviations (weights, measures, size)				
9. Reads alpha-numeric codes				
10. Reads time and date				
11. Reads simple generic drug names				

Beginning Level

Writing Checklist for (student's name) _____
Rating Criteria. Student is...
Communicative (CM); Partially communicative (PC); Not at all communicative (NC)

Writing Tasks	Date/Rating	Date/Rating	Date/Rating	DateRating
1. Writes personal information				
Writes name				
Writes address				
Writes phone number				
Writes month/day/year				
Writes date of birth				
Writes SS#				
2. Fills out a money order form				
3. Addresses an envelope Writes return address				
4. Fills out simple application form				
Note: Control of grammar and/or punctuation not expected at Beginning Level				